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UNCLAS E F T O SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 001198

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA, OES, EEB, INR, EUR
WHITE HOUSE ALSO FOR CEO

E.O. 12958: DNG: UN 09/12/2018

TAGS: SENV EWWT PBTS TPHY TSPL CA

SUBJECT: NSPD/HSPD ON ARCTIC POLICY - REQUEST CONSIDERATION
TO DELAY RELEASE

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly. Not for release outside the U.S. Government.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Embassy strongly believes release of the new Arctic Policy National Security Presidential Directive/Homeland Security Presidential Directive during Canada's federal election campaign has the potential to insert the United States as an issue in the campaign and negatively impact U.S.-Canadian relations. Embassy requests Washington agencies to delay the release of the new policy until after the October 14 election. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Embassy understands the United States is preparing to release a new National Security Policy Directive/Homeland Security Policy Directive on U.S. policy toward the Arctic. Embassy appreciates that Washington agencies are developing a "roll-out strategy" aimed at ensuring our new policy is not misinterpreted by host country governments and stressing the value we place on cooperation among Arctic states on science and protecting the environment.

¶3. (SBU) Prime Minister Harper has made the Arctic a priority focus for his government. The current Canadian federal election campaign will pay significant attention to the Arctic, with the Prime Minister echoing the themes of Canada's Arctic heritage and sovereignty he has enunciated regularly in the past. As we have reported, the Arctic and Arctic "sovereignty" are issues of great importance to Canadians, and support for greater Canadian activity in the Arctic is universally popular among the Canadian electorate.

¶4. (SBU) We disagree with Canada's position on the status of the Northwest Passage and have questions over some of the measures Canada has announced recently (such as Harper's August 27 suggestion that Canada would make mandatory the vessel traffic reporting provisions of its existing NORDREG system that are now just "encouraged"), but for the most part we support what Canada is doing to increase its presence in the Arctic. As the President said in Montebello on August 21, 2007, "the United States does not question Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic islands, and the United States supports Canadian investments that have been made to exercise

its sovereignty." Already at a high level, our cooperation with Canada on Arctic research continues to expand, as evidenced by the ongoing joint cruise for Arctic seabed mapping of U.S. Coast Guard and Canadian Coast Guard vessels.

¶5. (SBU) While we understand the new Arctic policy NSPD/HSPD will not announce changes with respect to our current relationship with Canada in the Arctic (including over the status of the Northwest Passage, Canadian sovereignty over its Arctic islands, the Beaufort Sea maritime boundary, or our long-standing cooperation with Canada on Arctic issues in general), the issuance of a new United States Arctic policy during the Canadian federal election campaign will provoke considerable attention) almost regardless of what the policy says) and may play a role in the campaign and Qpolicy says) and may play a role in the campaign and election. In the current environment Embassy expects that all parties vying in the election would criticize a new U.S. Arctic policy, and other parties would be especially harsh in their criticism of Stephen Harper's Conservatives for not having dissuaded the U.S. from issuing that new policy. That harsh criticism might resonate widely among the electorate, and we run the risk of provoking a response that could lead to a hardening of positions and a lessening of the overall excellent cooperation we maintain with Canada in the Arctic.

¶6. (SBU) For these reasons, Embassy requests the Department and other Washington agencies delay the release of the NSPD/HSPD on Arctic policy until after the conclusion of the Canadian federal election on October 14.

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